

Honoring the Life of the Rev. Billy Graham

Given on the Floor of the U.S. House of Representatives

□ by Congressman Jerry Moran

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Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to honor the life's work of a man whose mission is to serve the Lord, his God.

Last weekend, the Reverend Billy Graham held what could be his last crusade. The crusade in New York marked the culmination of a life dedicated to preaching faith, equality, and love to people the world over.

As a young man growing up in rural Kansas, I remember gathering in front of the television set with my mom and dad to hear this man speak. With integrity and truth he spoke of God's love for all people and our need to know this love in our own hearts. Even at that young age, I sensed that there was something special about this man; and, as I grew older, his words were a source of strength to my faith.

In times of trouble and disaster, we turn to God for strength and comfort. Three days after September 11, 2001, as our nation grieved the loss of life, America needed to have its faith restored. Our sense of peace that we had felt in our neighborhoods and our towns and our country had been severely shaken, and our belief in the goodness of man had been severely challenged.

Billy Graham, showing the effects of Parkinson's disease and age, slowly climbed the steps to the pulpit at the National Cathedral during a service to reflect upon these events. Although physically frail, the strength of his spirit projected confidence. With the assurance of his faith, he helped us understand that despite the evil that we had seen, God's love remains, God's love never fails and, with that love as our foundation, we could prevail. Reverend Graham's words gave meaning to the lives lost and restored faith to a mourning nation.

In 1957, Billy Graham held his first of seven crusades in New York City. Although his crusade in 1957 occurred at a time in our nation's history when race divided all, Reverend Graham refused to preach in segregated audiences.

To begin one night of the crusade in 1957, Reverend Graham invited Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to give an opening prayer. Another night of the crusade, the event was presented in Spanish. Reverend Graham and his team went to great lengths to ensure that the crusade meetings were accessible to those with disabilities. Although he had intended the crusade to last only six weeks, he stayed sixteen, in order to meet the needs of the people of New York.

By refusing to restrict his message to one audience, Billy Graham affirmed the equality of all people and God's equal love for all. Returning last weekend to New York City, Reverend Graham continued sharing his message of faith, equality, and love for all people.

Billy Graham has been a spiritual adviser to every President since my fellow Kansan, Dwight D. Eisenhower. He has written 24 books. His radio program "Hour of Decision" has been broadcast on Sundays around the world for more than 50 years. Reverend Graham has even been rated 47 times by the American people as one of the "Ten Most Admired Men in the World." However, it is his ability to reach people with the message of God's love that makes Billy Graham truly a special man.

Throughout his ministry, Billy Graham has preached to over 210 million people in more than 185 countries and territories. Yet, it is his personal impact on my life and the encouraging words that he has left with our nation that I am most grateful for and will always cherish.

Marking the occasion of his last crusade, I rise tonight to honor and thank Reverend Billy Graham for his influence on my life, on our nation, and the world.